

# Vivian Park chock-full of history

**By Sharon Haddock**  
Deseret News staff writer

PROVO — The natural beauty of a 7-year-old girl inspired the naming of Vivian Park.



**Vivian McBride**

According to research by Leila Hechtle for the Utah County Public Works Department, William "Billy" Ferguson — who held the title to the land between 1888 and 1896 — thought Vivian McBride was an adorable child and often told her mother, Melissa Duggins McBride, he was going to name the resort area after her.

The McBrides operated a store and post office in the canyon during Vivian's childhood. Ferguson ran a motel and cafe known as "Billy's Place."

Later, there were two more Vivians associated with the park, Vivian Slick, believed to have been named after Vivian McBride, and Vivian Purvance Fischer, a daughter of Grover and Edna Purvance, the couple who lived at the park for several years after Ferguson's death in a snowslide.

"A lot of people think the park was named after Vivian Slick because her parents resided there in 1900, but they're wrong," Hechtle said. "I've spent a lot of time with Vivian's McBride's daughter, Barbara Reichenback, and that's the more consistent story."

Hechtle has become some-

what expert on the park since her boss, Utah County Public Works Director Clyde Naylor, assigned her to dig out the history of Vivian Park.

Recently, as part of Public Works Week for Utah County, a three-sided stone monument in the corner of the park was dedicated.

The stories and pictures that are part of the monument panels were unearthed by Hechtle and are part of compilation history kept at the public works library.

"I've had a lot of people call me and tell me things and I've looked at all the records I could

find," Hechtle said.

At one time, Vivian Park was an exclusive vacation getaway, offering big band music and a restive break to families such as Thomas S. Monson's, a member of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Monson has talked often about visiting the family cabin in Vivian Park.

There was once a dance hall and an ice skating rink in the park area, along with the popular Vivian Park Resort cafe that at one time offered "sifted peas for 35 cents" and "a complete prime rib dinner for 60 cents."

The resort cafe was later renamed the "Chalet."

In 1917, 175 people lived there.

Vivian Park was and still is an access point for the Heber Creeper Railroad and a popular swimming hole with horses, boats, tents and cabins for rent nearby.

Two snowslides have hit the area, one in 1897 that killed Ferguson and another 89 years later that created severe flooding.

In 1974, Vivian Park became a Utah County public park.

E-MAIL: haddock@desnews.com



A monument tells the stories and shows the pictures of the history of Provo's Vivian Park.

STUART JOHNSON, DESERET NEWS

\* Vivian Park  
22 May Monument  
3pm 2001

over



